

12 March 1966

The Honorable Robert S. McNamara  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bob:

I transmit herewith five copies of our study: The Role of Airstrikes in Attaining US Objectives in North Vietnam. In accord with your specific interests, it

"... presents an analysis of the Rolling Thunder air offensive against North Vietnam, estimates the physical damage and human casualties resulting from the air campaign, and analyzes the US and South Vietnamese air operations employed to obtain these effects. Finally, the report evaluates the potential of air attacks as a weapon to achieve the stated objectives of the Rolling Thunder program, and considers alternative courses of action which are believed to be more promising ways of achieving the Rolling Thunder objectives. For purposes of comparison, some capsule evaluations of US experience gained from the air wars against Japan, Germany, and North Korea also are presented."

(From Foreword to the Study)

You are, I know, familiar with my concern about how stretches of bad weather have interrupted programs of armed

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reconnaissance against transport routes and vehicles in the DRV and Laos, and about how the enemy has capitalized on these holidays to repair damaged choke points or route his traffic around them. Hence, it seems to me, that greater consideration should be given to further development and use of all-weather air interdiction methods and techniques.

You will note that the study does not include an estimate of the probable reactions of the DRV and Communist China to a postulated new pattern of air attack, as set forth on pages 2-4 and 20-27 of the "Findings and Conclusions." The Board of National Estimates, with the assistance of other elements of the Agency is preparing such an estimate. It will be completed on 23 March.

Additional copies are handed herewith for such internal distribution as you may wish to do. In this connection may we draw special attention to the forthright cooperation of the J-3 (Vice Admiral Mustin) and Director, DIA (Lt. General Carroll).

Sincerely,

W. F. Raborn

Enclosures:  dated March 66: The Role of Airstrikes in attaining US objectives in North Vietnam.

cc: The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance  
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Retyped O/DCI--W. F. Raborn:ef

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11 March 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Study on The Role of Airstrikes in Attaining US Objectives in North Vietnam

1. Herewith five copies of the study on The Role of Airstrikes in Attaining US Objectives in North Vietnam and a draft letter of transmittal to Secretary McNamara.

2. The second paragraph of the letter represents the way in which [ ] and I recommend you handle the all-weather business. [ ] points out, for example, that the air people consider that they have an all-weather interdiction capability right now. If this is to be contested, we think it is much more appropriate for you as an airman to do it as a personal observation than for us to do so in the text of the document. If you wish to send the Secretary a follow-on memorandum stating your position at greater length we will of course prepare such a document. Perhaps the study Dr. Wheelon's people are working on is the best place to make this case.

3. As you are well aware, the study itself was prepared in Mr. William Morell's Office of Research and Reports.

STAT [redacted] and their people are the ones who really did the job and the ones to whom the credit is owing. In accord with Secretary McNamara's and your desire I have maintained close contact with the project from first to last. Four other members of the Board of National Estimates, who are most familiar with this aspect of the Vietnam problem (notably Mr. Abbot Smith, [redacted] STAT [redacted], have carefully reviewed the "Findings and Conclusions" in successive drafts. Needless to say, this part of the completed study has our full endorsement. Time and the press of other duties has prevented a similar amount of attention to the appendixes.

SHERMAN KENT  
Director  
National Estimates